

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



COMMISSION ON CHILDREN



ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Mission

The Commission on Children identifies and promotes public policy and local capacity building and coordinates efforts that support and improve the optimal development of all children in the state of Connecticut.

Statutory Responsibility

Public Act 85-584 created the Connecticut Commission on Children (COC) in 1985. The non-partisan Commission is required to promote public policies in children's best interest by:

- Providing information and conducting research regarding the status of children and children's programs in the state;
- Enlisting the support of leaders in business, health, and education, state and local governments and the media to improve policies and programs for children;
- Reviewing coordination and assessing programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect children;
- Serving as a liaison between government and private groups concerned with children; and
- Making recommendations for children annually to the Legislature and to the Governor.

Public Service

Public Information and Targeted Policy Research



Susan Haig, AP reporter with Dr. Miringoff at publication of Social State of Connecticut Report

- Published the 2004 *Social State of Connecticut* that reports to the Governor, the General Assembly and public on key social and health indicators affecting quality of life in Connecticut;
- Wrote and disseminated more than one million booklets for parents on preparing children for school, selecting quality child care, helping children read and children's health issues;



- Launched public service television and radio ads with Miss America on bullying with contact numbers for citizens to obtain more information;

- Presented children's issues on NBC television once a month;



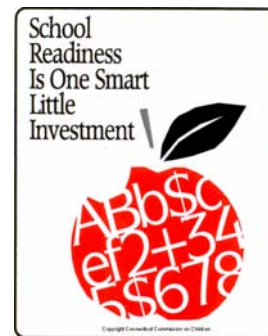
- Led a state and nationally televised forum on child obesity with Morgan Spurlock, Academy Award nominee for "Super Size Me", with national and state experts on child obesity; and prepared background information on state and national obesity trends and policy options.
- Led state and regional forums with national scholars on the impacts and solutions to child poverty;



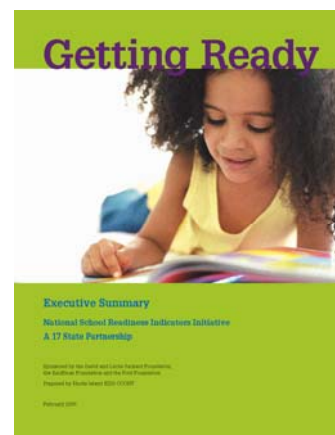
- Led a state kindergarten teacher survey on children's readiness for school in the priority school districts and released findings with state legislators, school and business leaders;
- Responded to public inquiry and community requests regarding children on the average of 350 requests per week;



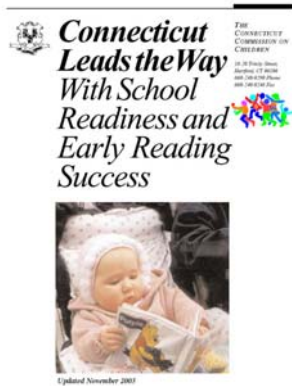
- Assessed the impact of terrorism on children three years later, reflecting on the change of context and expectations of children in Connecticut. Brought children and youth together to discuss terrorism and the impact of 9/11 on their lives;



- Led the state financing of school readiness report for the State Department of Education;



- Participated nationally in the 17-state School Readiness Indicators Initiative and organized the public education campaign on child indicators for town leaders;
- Provided targeted outreach to hard-to-reach families for timely immunizations to ensure the health of young children.



- Assisted the business sector in a comprehensive report on how children learn to read.
- Prepared research papers on the causes and impacts of child poverty, which were incorporated in the Child Poverty Council's Initial Plan released in 2/05;



- Developed resources for after school in Connecticut linked to the National After School Alliance.



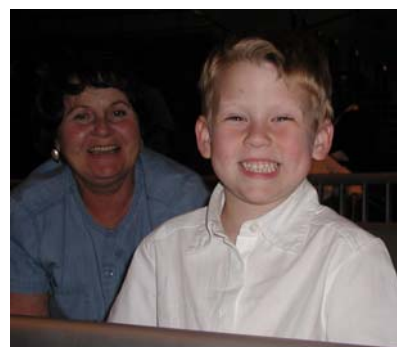
- Brought Cornell scholar and author, Dr. James Garbarino, to speak with school leaders on child aggression and bullying.

Leadership Development and Capacity-Building

The Commission builds the skills of the public to improve consumer input and ensure working policies for children and families. This includes:



- Youth forums and youth leadership development on public policy;
- Outreach and education to Immunization Coordinators in 20 towns;



- Outreach and education to local child care providers and school readiness councils;
- Community meetings on issues of import including bullying, primary prevention, school accountability, early childhood, health care and after school;



- An ongoing partnership with mayors on birth to eight issues of interest;

- Trainings for school leaders on bullying and ways to reverse child aggression;



- A nationally recognized Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) in 12 cities to help parents become constructive leaders for children;
- A Business Advisory Committee comprised of small and large businesses;

Major Research-Based Public Policies for Children

The Commission on Children performs research and policy design for the legislature and executive branch focused on good child outcomes and reduced costs in failure. The Commission worked with state leaders on the following landmark child policies:

- Required school districts to offer students healthier food choices and physical activity. (P.A. 04-215)
- Established the Child Poverty Council to develop a comprehensive plan to reduce child poverty by 50% over the next ten years. (P.A.-04-238)



- A website for youth to access information on civics, government, and history; and
- A Prevention Advisory to review prevention policy and to expand its potential in the interest of cost savings and proven child outcomes;
- Partnered with State Family Support Council on community forums with parents of children with disability and policymakers.
- The development of a curriculum for parents on how to partner with schools. This curriculum will be piloted this spring in two cities and launched in the fall of 2005.
- The training of child care providers in children's literature to facilitate young children learning about community, diversity and service.
- Established an after school line item appropriation in the budget for three local pilot communities to expand after school opportunities (P.A. 04-216).
- Improved school readiness staff qualifications by requiring 12 or more credits in early childhood in addition to an Associates Degree or four year degree. (P.A. No. 04-15)
- Created a state wide system for after school programs (P.A. 03-206, *An Act Concerning After School Programs*).
- Strengthened the work of the State Prevention Council by requiring the Council to determine the goals, strategies and outcomes measures to promote the health and well being of children and families (P.A. 03-145, *An Act Concerning the State Prevention Council and Investment Priorities*).

Improvements/Achievements

- Required state agencies to maximize federal dollars and report annually on the status of federal funds accessed as well as to report on federal funds not obtained and methods to enhance federal dollars in the future (P.A. 03-157, *An Act Concerning Maximization of Federal Funds*).
- Required all school boards to develop policies addressing bullying (P.A. 02-119, *An Act Concerning Bullying Behavior in Schools and Concerning the Pledge of Allegiance*).
- Recognized the unique social, emotional and mental health needs of children in the wake of terrorism, and required the state to plan for children and youth as part of homeland preparedness (S.A. 02-8, *An Act Concerning Civil Preparedness and the Needs of Children*).
- Required the Parent Education Advisory Council, established to implement Connecticut's parent education classes in divorce proceedings in Family Court, to develop program directions for the children of divorce (P.A. 02-132, Sec. 81).
- Drafted the original school readiness law and annually propose refinements based on outcome data and community reports (under P.A. 97-259) on statewide infrastructure for quality early care and legislation.
- Worked on implementation of the Parent Trust Act (P.A. 01-2, Sec. 39) a parent engagement initiative to maximize substantive consumer input and citizen participation in policy.

A Good Business Investment

The Commission raises dollars for the state. These dollars do not go exclusively to the Commission, but to an array of departments and public policy initiatives. Recent examples include:

- A federal earmark in Congress, of \$800,000 for the internationally recognized research instituted Haskins Laboratories,

based in New Haven, to continue working on teacher training in reading within targeted school districts;

- \$350,000 to establish a state after school intermediary through the C.S. Mott Grant. This person facilitates coordination of after school in our state;
- Philanthropic contributions towards school readiness research, community parent engagement and anti-bullying initiatives, totaling \$400,000;
- Five million dollars through HUD with the Connecticut Lead Action for Medicaid Primary Prevention Advisory Board for lead safe housing in 12 cities in Connecticut;



- Raised \$50,000 from the William Casper Graustein Foundation for the Parent Trust Act and \$40,000 for a state/philanthropic match on the Social State of Connecticut;
- Raised \$12,500 for the dissemination and discussion of the state's Social Health Index from the Connecticut Health Foundation and the Universal Health Care Foundation;
- Raised \$50,000 from the Hasbro Toy Company Foundation for national replication of Connecticut's Parent Leadership Training Institute;
- Raised \$10,000 from the Lone Pine Foundation for the curriculum design for parents on how to partner with schools;
- Raised \$60,000 from the Hartford Foundation to assist the mayor in a birth to eight agenda for children in Hartford;
- Raised Casey Foundation dollars to evaluate the cost savings of proven prevention policies for children;

- Coordinated a small business fundraiser for homeless children; and
- Provide routine information for policy leaders on federal funds maximization opportunities.

National Recognition

The Commission is linked to many national efforts:

- Selected as one of six states to receive federal funds for prevention to lead the nation in prevention strategies;
- Served as a consultant to the federal government in reading through the U.S. Dept. of Education Early Reading First and Reading First initiatives;
- Served as the state contact for the national I Am Your Child Campaign;
- Miss America, Erika Harold, launched her Nationwide Campaign on anti-bullying with the Commission and cited the Commission on Children for its policy work on school safety.
- Cornell scholar and author James Garbarino joined our state to discuss youth aggression and bullying, bringing over 600 teachers and school leaders together with parents.
- Morgan Spurlock, Academy Award nominee for best documentary, joined the Commission to discuss child obesity with national and state experts.
- Won the Good Housekeeping Award for best practice in state government.
- Recognized by the Washington D.C. based Family Impact Seminar as the best coordinating entity for children in the states.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

(CGS § 46a-128). Recent submissions to the Governor and the General Assembly include: *The Social State of Connecticut 2004*; *Listening Tour: Community Conversations on Prevention*.



Overflow attendance Bullying Forum with Dr. Garbarino



Student Panel Bullying Experiences



Morgan Spurlock – Obesity Forum



Students testifying Obesity Forum